POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES IN THE AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OF AMRITA PRITAM, KAMALA DAS AND SHOBHA DE: A CRITICAL STUDY.

***Synopsis* Submitted to**

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Introduction:-

The word 'Autobiography' literally means self (auto), life (bio) and writing (graphy). In an autobiography the author writes the story of his/her own life. It is the presentation of personality and the best examples of the period to which the author belongs. According to Dr. Johnson "Everyman's life is best written by himself." (Prasad: 236). Longfellow defines "Autobiography is a product of firsthand experience." (Prasad: 237). In short there is no true sort of writing than what is to be found in autobiographies and certainly none more entertaining.

Autobiography brings to us an increasing awareness of the nature of our own selves and our share in the human condition. It appeals to us not only because of the excitement of recorded gossip, information and whispers but also because it helps to find an order and meaning in life. Autobiography is a literature of personal revelation and its main interest lies in conscious or unconscious self portrayal by the author. The writer must give an account of his inner life that is sensation, ideas and emotions that keep floating not only through his/her conscious self but also through the unconscious one.

The ever changing reality of life inevitably reflects itself in its literature. The position of women in society is no exception to this phenomenon. The status of woman all over the world particularly in India has been undergoing rapid change in recent times. Woman is defined as the centre of culture but actually imprisoned in the walls of the family and shackled by the traditions. Now she begins to look upon herself from a different angle. The Indian woman writers have voiced their feelings through sensibility, awareness about feminine problems.

A woman's autobiography generally deals with the various issues like struggle for identity, loneliness, extramarital relationship, discrimination, exploitation and suppressed desires of women. 20th century came up with a set of women writers who are extraordinary, intellectual and dashing like Amrita Pritam, Kamala Das and Shobha De. They are no longer passive, submissive like Sita or Savitri but dashing, bold and innovative in their techniques of writing. The writing form of autobiography achieved its existence in India in the early 19th century. In the initial stage autobiographies of kings and queens were in existence. Later on the political leaders have started writing their autobiographies. Very few Indian woman writers have written their autobiography in the pre and post independence era.

The progress of human civilization is a record of many struggles and conflicts. The desire for rule is the natural instinct in human mind and trying to rule over less powerful in the history of most Eastern and Western countries. Colonialism is such a concept that clearly gives us an idea of how a particular nation tries to rule the indigenous territory for the sake of enhancing its economic and mechanical resources.

The word 'Colonialism' according to Oxford English Dictionary comes from the Roman word 'Colonia' which meant 'farm' or 'settlement'. It refers to Romans who settle in other lands but still retained their citizenship. Colonialism is the extension of a nation's sovereignty over territory beyond its borders by the establishment of either settler colonized or administrative dependencies in which indigenous population is directly ruled or displaced. Colonizers generally dominate the resources, labor and markets of the colonial territory and may also impose socio-cultural, religious and linguistic structures to the conquered population. However, though colonialism is often used interchangeably with imperialism. The later is sometimes used more broadly as it covers, control and exercised informally as well as formally.

At the time of colonization the status of women was inferior. They are only means to serve their husbands and family set-up. They are not allowed to be the part of outdoor activities. They are meant to look after the family and children. Women are leading their lives with suppressed desires in patriarchal society. There is no respect for women's feelings. Their status is like a doll. In India woman is thrice colonized first from her own father, secondly from her husband and thirdly from the social taboos. Simon De Beauvoir argues that "A woman is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (Nayar: 88). In colonized India women don't have a right to raise their voice against injustice. They have to follow the rules and regulations laid down by the patriarchal society. In the select autobiographies too women are colonized.

The broad meaning of the term 'postcolonialism' can be best understood by tracing the etymology of the word 'post' and 'colony'. The word 'post' is derived from the Latin term 'postis', which means 'after' or 'behind'. The word 'colony' takes its origin from the Latin term 'colonus', which refers to a cultivator, a planter or a settler in a new land. Literally the term 'postcolonialism' refers to the period after colonialism. The term 'postcolonialism' refers to the ways in which race, ethnicity, culture and human identity itself are represented in the modern era. Many colonized countries gained their independence in the postcolonial period.

Until the mid 20th century the European powers exerted their dominance over the vast regions of Asia, Africa and South America. The dominance was confined not only to the political lives of the people but also extended to the cultural, economical and social living conditions of the colonized people. A massive struggle in the colonized nations resulted in the overthrow of the colonial rule. These liberated nations are known as 'postcolonial'. It suggests the liberation from 'colonialism' and 'imperialism'. In this way the term 'post

colonialism' can be defined as the historical, cultural, economical, political and actual living conditions of the newly independent nation.

The term 'postcolonial literature' refers to the literature produced by the writers who were formerly colonized and subjugated. Postcolonial literature emerged in the mid 20th century when many colonized nations were fighting for their liberation from the colonizers. Helen Gilbert's definition of 'postcolonialism' reads as: "It is the term that indicates a degree of agency or a program of resistance against cultural domination, signals the existence of a particular historical legacy, stage in a culture's transmission into a modern nation state. The term postcolonial has become a convenient term to describe any kind of resistance against class, race, gender operation, culture and patriarchy.

The Indian subcontinent remained under the British imperial rule, more than 200 years. During the imperial rule the natives were subjected to a number of harassments. Especially, the cultural and moral lives of the natives were deeply disconfigured. Indian writers emerged with a view to unite Indians and to wipe out the colonial dominance. The early works of the Indian English authors were set against the backdrop of the postcolonial themes of nationalism, racism, ethnicism and cultural identity. The writers also dealt with a variety of sub-themes such as rootlessness, alienation, gender discrimination, hybridity, poverty, marginalism and so on.

The women writers of the postcolonial Indian English literature focused on the themes of alienation, poverty, isolation and disillusionment in the familial lives of the Indian folk. Once the country becomes free and the society gain stability people become candid and self assertive. The social upheaval got expression not only in poetry and fiction but also in the autobiographies. The autobiographical genre got a new meaning and opened up new vistas of knowledge for all.

The present proposed research is an attempt to find postcolonial perspectives in the select Indian women's autobiographies. The select women writers focused on realistic experiences of women's lives through literature. They wanted to show that discrimination, subjugation and inferiority affect women's daily lives in the male dominated society.

Amrita Pritam (1919-2005) was an Indian novelist essayist and poet. Who wrote in Punjabi and Hindi. She is considered the first prominent woman poet, novelist and essayist. Her notable works include *Pinjar*, *Ajj aakhaan Waris*, *Suneray* (poem) and the famous autobiography *The Revenue Stamp* (1977) reflect her full and creative journey of life. She is the first woman to win the Sahitya Akademi Award for her magnum opus a long poem *Suneray.* Later she received the Bhartiya Gyanpeeth one of India's highest literary award in 1982. She is also awarded with Padma Shri in 1969 and Padma Vibhushan in 2004.

Kamala Das (1934-2009) was recognized as one of the India's foremost poet who was the author of several novels, collection of poetry and short stories in English as well as in Malayalam. Some of her works in English include the novel *Alphabet of Lust* (1977), a collection of short stories *Padmavati*, *the Harlot and other stories* (1922), the poetry collections S*ummer in Calcutta* (1965). *My Story* (1977) is a sensational autobiography shocked the readers. She received several awards including the Pen Poetry Prize and the Sahitya Akdemy Aaward. She was also nominated for the Nobel Prize for literature in 1984.

Shobha De is the new voice in Indian English fiction. She is voted by Reader's Digest as ‘one of the India's most trusted people and one of the fifty most powerful women in India’. She is one of India's highest selling authors and a popular social commentator. Her works comprising both fiction and nonfiction has been translated into many Indian languages as well as French, German, Russian, Spanish and Turkish. In 1989 she has published her debut

novel *Socialite Evenings*. Her notable works include *Starry Nights*, *Spouse*, *Second Thoughts*, *Sultry Days* and famous autobiography *Selective Memory: Stories from My Life* (1998).

1.1.Statement of the Problem:

The present proposed research title is 'Postcolonial Perspectives in the Autobiographies of Amrita Pritam, Kamla Das and Shobha De: A Critical Study'. It aims to explore the postcolonial perspectives in the select Indian women autobiographies, like exploitation, struggle for identity, portrayal of self, loneliness, extra marital relationship and suppressed desires and dreams of postcolonial Indian women. At the postcolonial time women are raising their voice against exploitation, injustice, inequality and suppression of desires done in the male dominated society.

1.2.Review of Literature:

The review of literature involves detail literary study in the field of given subject. It includes the study of Indian women's autobiography or memoir. It is a favourite form of women writers to express their thoughts and feelings. '*Women Autobiography Theory',* is the first comprehensive guide written by Simony Smith and Julia Watson. It concerns to the burgeoning field of women's autobiography. As Carrol Smith puts: "It is more than a collection on women autobiography theory. It is significant scholarly achievements reflecting the full spectrum of studies in feminist autobiography" (Heilbronn. P. 37). It is analysed that main stream literature composed by men has represented women as weak, shy and self sacrificing all the time but these women have expressed their feelings freely by writing poetry, short stories and autobiographies.

The best autobiographies are those in which expose the inner journey of the self and depict the inner struggles of the person. It creates an individual identity of the person.

Sunetee Devi is a well known autobiography writer who composed the autobiography entitled "*The Autobiography of an Indian Princess*" published in 1921. Through this autobiography she has depicted the inner feelings of Indian women of the 19th and 20th century.

In the postcolonial period we have seen many autobiographies have been written. Nayan Tara Sahgal is another woman who composed her autobiographies under the title *"Prison and Chocolate Cake"* in 1954 and her second autobiography is published entitled *"From Fear Set Free"* in the year 1962. In her first autobiography she becomes reminiscent. She has recorded the political life of her family at Anand Bhavan in Allahabad. Ismat Chagatai is another woman who published her autobiography by name *"A Life in Words"* in which she has represented powerful women's history. It offers a glimpse into the turbulent and unconventional life of her who refused to be bogged down by social norms. These writers discuss the issues of women and raised their voices against inequality.

1.3.Aims and Objective of Research:

The aims and objectives of proposed research are as follows.

1) To understand the struggle for identity.
2) To study the feminine consciousness.
3) To find out the causes of loneliness.
4) To analyse the problems of Indian women.
5) To evaluate man-woman relationship.
6) To investigate women's subjugation and discrimination in patriarchal society.
7) To bring women in the main stream of development.

8) To explain the Indian women's exploitation, plight and oppression.

9) To interpret the evolution of new women.

10) To comprehend extra marital relationship.

1.4.**Rationale of the study**

The rational of this proposed research is to concentrate on the 'Postcolonial Perspectives in the Autobiographies of Amrita Pritam, Kamla Das and Shobha De: A Critical Study'. The select women writers represented struggle for identity of a postcolonial Indian women and how they are living with suppressed desires and dreams. Indian women are victimized by men and patriarchal society. The rational of the research is to find out how post colonial women become aware about their rights and duties and how they are raising their voice against male dominated society.

1.5.Hypothesis:

The present proposed research work is based on the following hypothesis:

1) Women have no wide identity in colonial period.

2) Due to patriarchal dominance women have lost their consciousness.

3) Women used to live lonely, isolate and separate by thinking in the male dominated society.

4) Indian women have faced many problems in the house and also outside the house like, inequality, lack of freedom, suppression of desires, etc.

5) Men-women relationships were not ideal in patriarchal society.

6) Women are considered in the process of development. It is assumed that they are backward by thoughts.

7) Indian women at large subjugated, discriminated and oppressed in Indian society.

8) In transition period, women were evolving as independent bold and self assertive.

9) Due to unfulfilled desires some women had extra marital relationships.

1.6.Research Methodology

The proposed study is partly analytical, descriptive and partly applied in nature. The autobiographies selected for the study will be analysed in the light of postcolonial perspectives. The survey will be taken in the field to work from the general to specific. Interviews with writer will also be made for true understanding the ideology of the writer. The research data will be collected by visiting reputed libraries like EFLU, Hyderabad, The Library of University of Bombay. The citations in present study will be in accordance with the update version of MLA handbook Eighth Edition.

1.7.**Data Collection**:

The proposed research is highly based on primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include all three selected autobiographies undertaken for study. The secondary sources likes, Journals, magazines, research articles and reference books on Indian women autobiographies, Research dissertation and thesis. E-resources will be used. The secondary sources will be analysed in quantitative and qualitative level.

1.8.**Scope and Limitation**:

The scope of present proposed research is to understand and examine the postcolonial perspectives in the autobiographies of Amrita Pritam, Kamla Das and Shobha De. The study is proposed to concentrate on Indian women's issues like struggle for identity, discrimination,

extramarital relationship and patriarchal dominance, etc. in the select autobiographies. The present study will restrict to the three autobiographies include, *The Revenue* Stamp, *My Story* and *Selective Memory*: *Stories from My Life*.

1.9.The Significance of the Study

The proposed research will focus on struggle for identity, discrimination of women, etc. in patriarchal society. The main focus of the study is on Indian women's struggle at home, society and how they are raising their voices against suppression in the universe. The research highlights how socially, emotionally and economically Indian women are ill treated in the society for centuries and still such practices are going on in the patriarchal society.

Tentative Chapterization:

For the purpose of convenience the present study is divided into five chapters.

Chapter I: **Introduction**

The first chapter is of introduction. It includes the definition of autobiography, types of autobiography and its features. It also comprises features of Colonialism and Post colonialism. It focuses on biographical and literary sketch of select authors. The chapter concludes with review of literature and research methodology.

Chapter II: **Postcolonial perspectives in *The Revenue Stamp***

The second chapter deals with postcolonial perspectives in *The Revenue Stamp* (1977). Pritam reveals her personal experiences like, her uneasy relationship with her father, her extramarital relations with her lover and struggle for identity, etc.

Chapter III: Postcolonial Perspectives in *My Story*

The third chapter comprises Kamala Das' Struggle for identity, confessionalism, and feminine consciousness. It deals with the oppressions of patriarchy, loneliness and desperate search for true and lasting love.

Chapter IV: Postcolonial Perspectives in *Selective Memory: Stories from My Life*

The fourth chapter depicts her relationships with her parents and siblings. She has rebelled against patriarchal society through her writing. The autobiography reconstructs the images of self lost in the irrevocable past. She has also focused on gender discrimination in it.

Chapter V: Conclusion

The fifth chapter deals with the conclusion and scope for future research. It will sum up findings, comments of the researcher and critical study of the research. Finally the research will trace the obstacles in the development of Indian women and how they face those obstacles to find their self. It would be the concern of this chapter to correlate and test the objectives to record findings and see if the answers to the posed questions are discovered.

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